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UNCLAS ANKARA 006982

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EB/TRA/OTP-BMATTINGLEY AND EUR/SE  
PARIS FOR TSA  
BRUSSELS FOR FAA

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [FAIR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: FAA PRESSES GOT ON AIR SAFETY OVERSIGHT

Ref: BRUSSELS BE 4914

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1. (SBU) In December 7 meetings with Transport and Communications Ministry officials, John Barbagallo, FAA Technical Branch Manager, and Kurt Edwards, Senior Representative, urged the Turks to take steps to cut turnover of air safety inspectors, a key U.S. concern with respect to Turkish civil aviation oversight. FAA also reiterated its standing offer to provide training once the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) builds a sufficient cadre of experienced inspectors.

2. (SBU) Director General of Civil Aviation Topa Toker and Director of Flight Standards Haydar Yalcin told us that the Transport and Communications Minister and other interested ministries supported draft legislation designed to address this problem. At the time of the meeting, the Prime Ministry was reviewing the bill. Toker told us the goal was for the GOT to submit the legislation to parliament in mid-December.

3. (SBU) The key benefit of the bill is that it would permit DGCA to increase hiring as well as salaries. Inspectors currently earn a tiny fraction of the salaries on offer in the private sector, which is currently experiencing rapid growth. Under the bill, DGCA would remain under the authority of the Transport Minister, but with financial autonomy. Toker told us that he would have preferred legislation removing DGCA from the Ministry altogether, but that the arrangement contemplated by legislation was still a great improvement over the current situation. Yalcin predicted that if, as expected, parliament acts relatively quickly, DGCA would need several months to reorganize and would then be able to send inspectors to training in the second half of 2005.

4. (SBU) In a separate meeting, Acting Transport and Communications Undersecretary Mehmet Kutlu made similar points. Kutlu explained that, despite strong ministerial support for the legislation, it had been held up until parliament passed a public sector reform law earlier in 2004. The current bill would enable hiring of foreign oversight staff, and allow DGCA to offer salaries about twice as high as those paid to equivalent civil service employees. Kutlu told us that the Ministry would hire 27 new staff in connection with the EU accession process and could make some of those new positions available to DGCA to strengthen aviation oversight. Kutlu emphasized that Turkish Airlines is maintaining high standards in aircraft maintenance and airworthiness.

5. (U) Embassy will follow up with DGCA and MFA officials on this legislation.

6. (U) FAA Senior Representative cleared this message.  
EDELMAN